

**In the claims:**

Please cancel claims 6, 11, and 12 without prejudice.

*D*  
**Claim 4 (Twice Amended).** A process for the preparation of a protein having a molecular weight of about 24kd[, or a functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof,] and capable of specifically binding to [a protein] E2 of hepatitis C virus, or for the preparation of a functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof, comprising the steps of:

*D*  
i) contacting cells with a preparation of E2;  
ii) [i] obtaining a membrane preparation from cells exhibiting binding to [an HCV protein] E2; and  
iii) [ii)] purifying said protein from said preparation.

*D*  
**Claim 10 (Twice Amended).** A process for the preparation of a protein [according to any one of claims 2-4] having a molecular weight of about 24kd and capable of specifically binding to E2 of hepatitis C virus, or a functionally equivalent variant or fragment thereof, comprising the steps of:

*D*  
i) contacting cells with a preparation of E2;  
ii) [i)] obtaining a membrane preparation from mammalian cells selected for binding to E2;  
iii) [ii)] precipitating the preparation with ammonium sulphate at less than 33% saturation and retaining the supernatant;  
iv) [iii)] precipitating the supernatant with ammonium sulphate at between 33 and 50% saturation and retaining the precipitate; and